

Disability Awareness Month

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

While March has been designated in Indiana and other states as the month to celebrate people with disabilities, it can take on greater local importance if your mayor makes a special Disability Awareness Month proclamation in your community.

Request

To arrange for your city's mayor to make an Awareness Month proclamation, contact the mayor's office as soon as possible and find out who is in charge of proclamations. It is important that you make initial contact right away because the mayor's activity calendar often is booked weeks in advance.

Once you reach the correct staff member, explain that March has been declared as Disability Awareness Month for all people with disabilities. Then explain that awareness activities at the local level would gain greater significance if the mayor made a public proclamation supporting the cause. Be sure to say that you have a sample proclamation available if the mayor would like to use it. Ask if the mayor would need your request in writing. If so, provide all the details.

Date/Location

Once the mayor agrees to make the proclamation, decisions must be made regarding when and where it will be given. For example, will it be part of the mayor's routine news conference or part of a special awareness kick-off activity? After the details are arranged, send the mayor a follow-up letter that confirms important information.

Media Relations

You also need to find out whether someone at the mayor's office is in charge of media relations. If so, contact that person to see whether the mayor's office will notify the media of the upcoming proclamation or if you should coordinate media relations.

If you will be in charge of media relations, distribute an advisory to your local media one week before the proclamation is to be made. Simply prepare a media advisory according to the enclosed sample and mail it to the editor(s) of local newspaper(s) and the news director(s) at radio and television stations. A follow-up call one or two days before the event helps to attract media. If the media are aware of the mayor's upcoming announcement, they might be encouraged to attend the proclamation and prepare a story.

Make sure you greet the media representatives who attend and write down their names and publications/stations for follow-up purposes. Also plan to take black-and-white photos, if possible, for distribution to print media.

It is recommended that you provide follow-up materials to the media who weren't able to attend. A news release is enclosed as a guide for preparing an "after-the-fact" announcement. This release should be sent to local newspapers and radio and TV stations.

If you have black-and-white photographs, submit them along with the releases to print media. Be sure all persons in the photos are identified on the backs of the photos. To avoid damaging the photos, do not write directly on them; instead, stick on an adhesive label that lists names of those pictured.

NOTE: If the proclamation will be signed or read as part of a major Disability Awareness Month event, incorporate information about the proclamation in the media materials you prepare for the specific event. This will save you time and effort.

Follow Up

After the proclamation is read, you should follow up with thank you letters to the mayor and other participants, as well as to media representatives who came to the event or developed a story. The enclosed letter is a sample for you to use as a guide. You should personalize your letter(s), using your own words, ideas and interesting facts from the event.

NOTE: In the past, projects such as this have taken 4-6 hours to complete.

(Sample Proclamation)

CITY OF (city's name)
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Executive Order

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENT MAY COME, GREETINGS:

WHEREAS, the month of March, 20--, has been designated as "Disability Awareness Month" to celebrate and recognize people with disabilities by the Governor of the State of Indiana; and

WHEREAS, disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals with disabilities to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society and experience full in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of American society; and

WHEREAS, family members, friends and members of the community can play a central role in enhancing the lives of people with disabilities especially when the family and community are provided with necessary support services; and public and private employers are aware of the capabilities of people with disabilities to be engaged in competitive work in inclusive settings; and

WHEREAS the goals of this city and state properly include providing individuals with disabilities the opportunities and support to make informed choices and decisions; live in homes and communities where such individuals can exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens; pursue meaningful and productive lives; contribute to their family, community, State and Nation; have interdependent friendships and relationships with others; and achieve full inclusion in society.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, (mayor's name), Mayor of the City of (city's name), do hereby proclaim the month of March, 20--, as

DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

in the City of (city's name), and call upon citizens of (city's name) to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities; furthermore, I encourage the citizens of (city's name) to seek counsel and input from any person or group with knowledge and expertise in matters concerning disabilities.

(Official Seal) IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed, the great seal of the City of (city's name), at the Mayor's Office, this _____ day of March, 20--.

Mayor (signature), City of (city's name)

(Sample Media Advisory)

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact:
(Your name)
(Your phone)

MEDIA ADVISORY

Who (John Doe), Mayor of (Anytown), Indiana

What Mayor (Doe) will make an official proclamation to the City of (Anytown).

When (Wednesday, March --, 20--, at 10 a.m.)

Where Office of the Mayor,
(City Building)
(123 Main Street)

Why To proclaim March as Disability Awareness Month in (Anytown)

#

(Sample News Release)

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact:
(Your name)
(Your phone)

Mayor (Doe) Proclaims March as Disability Awareness Month

(Anytown), Ind. – (John Doe), Mayor of (Anytown), has officially proclaimed March as Disability Awareness Month in (Anytown).

The mayor's proclamation states that, "Through increased awareness of such programs [for people with disabilities], the public will better understand the needs and ultimate potential of people with disabilities."

"I think it is important that members of our community who are not disabled increase awareness of the needs and concerns of fellow citizens who have disabilities," Mayor (Doe) said.

Local activities during Awareness Month will include (a poster campaign, art contest and awareness activities fair).

For more information, contact (John Doe) at (123-4567).

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(Sample Thank You Letter)

(Date)

(John Doe)
Mayor
(123 Main Street)
(Anytown), Indiana (46000)

Dear Mayor (Doe):

Thank you for proclaiming March as Disability Awareness Month. By publicly announcing the month, you have helped us create and increase awareness about people with disabilities.

The (Anytown Support Group for People with Disabilities) encourages other (Anytown) citizens to follow your example and become supporters of people with disabilities. It is our goal to raise the level of public understanding of what it is like to have a disability. We appreciate your help in working toward that goal.

Thanks again for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

(Your name)
(Title)

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION TIMELINE CHECKLIST

** This timeline checklist should be adjusted according to your specific planning time frame.

Six weeks before the proclamation date:

- _____ Call mayor's office and ask about the proclamation procedure.
- _____ Send a written request for a proclamation to the mayor's office, as well as a sample proclamation, if necessary.

Five weeks before the proclamation date:

- _____ Confirm that the mayor is willing to participate.
- _____ Work with the mayor's office to choose a place and date to deliver the proclamation. Call the person in charge of that building to reserve the date. Keep in mind that high traffic buildings will increase your event's visibility. Make sure that the building is accessible to people with disabilities.
- _____ Ask whether you or a representative of the mayor's office will be coordinating media relations.

Four weeks before the proclamation date:

- _____ Call the local newspaper(s), radio and television station(s) and get contact names for the release you will be mailing. Be sure to get the correct spelling of names, titles and mailing addresses.

Two weeks before the proclamation date:

- _____ Mail the media advisory to the appropriate contacts.
- _____ A few days after you mail the materials, follow up by phone with your contacts to be sure they received the advisory.

One week before the proclamation date:

- _____ Get friends and volunteers to help monitor media coverage.
- _____ Arrange for a volunteer photographer to take black-and-white pictures of the mayor delivering the proclamation. Send the black-and-white prints to the media after the event.

Day of the event:

- _____ Arrive 15 minutes early to make sure everything is set up properly.
- _____ Greet the mayor and media representatives. Ask reporters their names and which media outlets they represent.

After the proclamation date:

- _____ Send thank you letters to the mayor and media who attended.
- _____ Send a follow-up news release and black-and-white photo to the local newspaper(s) that did not cover your event. Be sure to clearly identify those photographed.